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# Ashford-Dunwoody Branch YMCA Atlanta, Georgia

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ASHFORD-DUNWOODY BRANCH YMCA  
ATLANTA, GEORGIA

by

HARRY C. HARRITOS

A Terminal Project submitted to the Faculty of  
the College of Architecture, Clemson University,  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the degree of

MASTER OF ARCHITECTURE

May 1979

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Man of the future barring a nuclear holocaust, will adapt to hydrocarbons in the air, detergents in the water, crime in the streets and crowded recreational areas. Good decision becomes meaningless if we consider that man will be reshaped to fit whatever environment we want. The long question is not so much what sort of environment we want, but what sort of man we want.

Robert Sommer

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background ymca

During the early years of the 17th century, societies composed of Christian young men existed throughout Europe. These societies or groups existed for social as well as spiritual functions.

In England, during the early development, the societies were little more than social meeting places for the wealthy class. A person's worth was greatly determined by which club or society he belonged to. Little organized activities occurred other than sports activities or card and chess matches. Almost no thought was given to helping others outside the hallowed walls of each society. In later years, these societies were to divide into several classes of organizations, but most were to become health and sports clubs for the wealthy Englishmen.

In 1844, a young man named George Williams became interested in the need for greater recreational and spiritual opportunities for the working class. He found the adverse moral climate and the lack of organized recreational activities appalling. Together with twelve men, he established the Young Men's Christian Association on June 6, 1844, to help cope with the mounting problems among the working class. This society was to guide young men in the Christian way of life as well as provide a place for organized recreation.

The beginning years saw little acceptance of George Williams' proposals. England was too class conscious to be interested in the needs of the working class, therefore, the YMCA lacked funds to make its proposals into realities.

By 1848, through private donations, the YMCA had founded six local chapters throughout the lower class areas of London. Although their membership was small at first, the YMCA had begun to fulfill a basic need in the community and later throughout the world.

In 1849, the concepts and principles of the Young Men's Christian Association were carried from London to Europe and North America where they fell into more congenial soil than was found for them in England. In America, the YMCA was to develop into the association its English founders had envisioned. America was a relatively new country that lacked the class concept that plagued England and Europe. Also, America was just beginning to discover its wealth and big business was beginning to play a more important role in society, a role that both profited society monetarily and culturally. The American associations adopted the constitution made by Williams and began a program to foster the ideals of the YMCA into every major city in the United States and Canada.

In less than four years, the YMCA had grown into one of the largest organizations of Christian service in the United States. European growth had also begun modelled after the London associations. In less than eleven years, George Williams' dream had become a reality with YMCA's throughout England, Europe, and North America.

The American association movement grew to maturity in the last third of the 19th century. This was the most dynamic period of economic and social change in the history of the United States, for during it the gigantic forces of capital and industry transformed the essentially rural nation of the pre-Civil War era into the modern American of factories, cities, and rapid communication and transportation. Promises of riches and freedom brought myriads of migrants from every nation of the world, creating in the industrial cities labor surpluses and unspeakable slums.

The YMCA's set themselves to bettering the lives of thousands of young men who sought their fortunes in the cities. Primarily the offspring of the protestant life of this country, the association also reflected the economic and social folways of the business groups with which they were intimately related. Communities were urged to construct YMCA buildings and maintain their programs because to do so was a good investment.



The Reconstruction Years witnessed YMCA's springing up in small towns and in cities resulting in the birth of the largest building campaign of the association's history.

During this vast building period, changes were also occurring in the social and recreational programs offered by the YMCA. Although the associations were funded to bind together Christian young men towards the Savior, the associations were becoming less religiously oriented. The activities were no longer limited to within the association's building but often extended to that of coordinating the welfare and relief facilities of the community, or providing what no other agency could.

By 1910, the YMCA was no longer a metropolitan organization located within a single building. Branch memberships were being founded in rural areas, and the association was sponsoring more high school and college activities.

New approaches and ideas were realized during the twenty years 1920-1940. A standard, all-around program of men's work and activities was developed and initiated for the guidance of the associations. Many of these programs still exist today in the majority of the YMCA's.

A fresh, new building movement resulted. The concept of "family centers" came into existence. Such "family

centers" were usually located away from the Central Business District and placed in an area with adequate lands for outdoor activities. These facilities reflected all the new technical advances, and immediately become meeting centers as well as show places in each community.

Today there are over 20,000,000 members of the YMCA's in 72 different countries, with a total of 2,500 North American associations with an active membership of over 5,000,000 people.

Typical features of the YMCA's present system are boys work programs, teen-age activities, camping, counseling, vocational training, informal educational activities, recreational activities and training, and public affairs programs.

The YMCA building prototype has changed to one of more flexible use of space and greater versatility among the different communities.

atlanta ymca



The Atlanta YMCA was first organized in 1858. The association was incorporated in 1883 and a Charter was granted for its operation as an eleemosynary organization with a religious purpose. Two years later the first YMCA building in Atlanta was constructed located in the Central City District. The YMCA decentralized its program in 1945 by opening three neighborhood branches. By 1948 four additional YMCA branches had been constructed in outlying neighborhoods. The acquisition of camp property continued this decentralization process. Eight branches are currently in operation with the prospect of adding additional branch facilities within the next three to five years.

The YMCA of metropolitan Atlanta is a non-profit corporation concerned with human development, operating primarily in the seven counties which form the metropolitan geographical core. The YMCA is a membership organization but does not limit its services to registered members.

The association provides a variety of services, reaching all ages. These are designed to enhance human growth--spiritually, mentally, and physically. These three essential fundamentals are present, either directly or indirectly, in the substance of every activity.

Most of the work of the metropolitan association is conducted by the neighborhood YMCA branches with prescribed

geographical service areas and, for the most part, are strategically located.

The YMCA of metropolitan Atlanta is a wholly autonomous organization, responsible to its own destiny. It does maintain a relationship with other associations through its membership in regional, national as well as international YMCA Councils.

The YMCA of metropolitan Atlanta sponsors a large decentralized program conducted in a neighborhood setting where young people live. The overall objective is to encourage development in the kinds of father-son relationship that results from basic understanding and life-long companionship. Using schools, playgrounds, churches and even homes, the YMCA provides a progressive program of social-recreational activities which begins with children and continues through high school. With primary emphasis on outdoor events, the overall program seeks to prepare each young person for independence within a climate of mutual trust.

The YMCA services are available to both youth and adults without regard to race or creed. There are many activities for individuals, but the emphasis is on group or team effort. Leadership development is stressed and laymen are trained for community service. Where

physical and recreational facilities are available, classes and instruction are regularly conducted.

The metropolitan Atlanta YMCA plays a leading role in the field of physical fitness. While recreation and organized sports are a most important aspect of YMCA service, the association places major emphasis on both general conditioning and remedial exercise. The YMCA has been able to develop a progressive program involving hundreds of adults and young people. It is significant to note that among the participants are many business and community leaders. These men are important to the welfare of the metropolitan area and the YMCA makes a contribution to their productivity by keeping them fit.

Today metropolitan Atlanta's population is approximately 1,750,000, and much of this growth is immediately reflected by the intense residential expansion. At the same time, the business and industrial growth has been very rapid as well. Shopping centers and commercial buildings continue increased development and major national firms have moved their headquarters into this area. As a result the YMCA must strive to keep ahead of this phenomenal growth in order to maintain and improve the services demanded of it by the total metropolitan community.

problem statement



The YMCA of metropolitan Atlanta Board of Trustees initiated a proposal calling for the construction of the Ashford-Dunwoody Branch YMCA specifically designed to accommodate the facilities needed to serve the entire family. This building will include a gymnasium, natatorium, locker areas, handball courts, track and general exercise area. It will also house the social and administration activities of the branch.

The site, approximately 18.5 acres of land in the North Atlanta area, was contributed to the YMCA in 1972. The property contains a large masonry home situated on a beautifully wooded site. Also included on the site is a swimming pool, soccer field, six tennis courts, basketball and volleyball courts.

The existing house will be renovated and will connect directly with the new facility providing additional club and meeting rooms.

The distinctive functions of the YMCA building in the community should be characterized as an attractive, stimulating, and inviting environmental setting. The entire facility should provide support to the community context by responding to scale characteristics of its surrounding environment.

objectives

In considering an architectural problem and its given definition, objectives should first be clearly established. Listed here are the objectives of the Ashford-Dunwoody Branch YMCA, objectives that should prove to become valid criteria for the realization and success of this facility.

- Develop character with emphasis on spiritual, physical, and social development
- Present a clean progressive image promoting community pride
- Provide activities and services to encourage individual, family and community participation
- Respond and support the scale characteristics of the site, neighborhood and community
- Present an expression of clarity, flexibility and efficiency.
- Respond to energy conservation demands



site analysis

The 18.5 acre site is located on Ashford-Dunwoody Road in North Dekalb County of metropolitan Atlanta. Ashford-Dunwoody Road, which forms the eastern boundary of the site, is a major traffic artery with direct access to I-285, a six-lane ring road encompassing the metropolitan area of Atlanta. The northern boundary of this is formed by a private high school and the southern boundary by multi-family dwelling units.

The character of the local neighborhood consists basically of one or two-story single family homes of wood siding or masonry with each house enjoying ample lawn area. The neighborhood typifies a comfortable suburban upper middle income setting.

Presently, there exists on the property a masonry house and swimming pool located on a beautifully wooded area of the site. This structure is currently used as the Ashford-Dunwoody YMCA Annex. The house is very simple, while the views of the house from the road are elegant and dynamic. There also exists on the site a soccer field, six tennis courts, a basketball court, a volleyball court, an Indian Village and a dressing room barn. Major utility services (electricity, water, sewer, gas) are located on the site.

The entire site is heavily covered with large oak and pine trees. The tree masses create buffer zones along the boundaries of the site helping to maintain and define the visual spaces on the site.

The most prominent characteristics of the property are the views and vistas of the gentle tree-covered slopes forming intimate, exciting visual spaces throughout the site.

program

The following program and spatial requirements are based on the needs of the community as determined by the YMCA of metropolitan Atlanta.

- Off-street parking satisfying code requirements and site conditions
- New facility direct access to the existing outside pool area
- Existing house direct connection to new facility
- Maintain residential scale of the community
- Access to outdoor activities on the site
- Circulation system simplicity
- Barrier free design

## SPACE REQUIREMENTS

Area/Sq.Ft.

## ENTRANCE LOBBY AND ADMINISTRATION

7,195

Entrance Vestibule	850
Lobby Waiting Area	1,200
Display Area	150
Lounge/Coat Room	350
Control/Information Desk	375
Administration/Reception Area	480
General Clerical Office	730
Executive Director's Office	350
Staff Offices (3)	675
Conference Room	475
Duplicating/Work Room	350
Storage Room	250
Men's Public Toilet (2)	540
Women's Public Toilet (2)	540

## NATATORIUM (Tank 45 ft. x 25 m)

8,760

Spectator Seating/Permanent (150)	1,280
Pool Storage Room	800

## HEALTH CLUB

3,440

Lounge	250
Attendant/Tote Basket Room	275
Locker Room (200)	575
Special Exercise	375
Nap Room	120
Sun Lamp Room (2)	120
Massage Room (3)	250
Shower/Drying	385
Wet/Dry Toilets (2)	150
Sauna	200
Steam Room	200
Whirlpool	150
Utility Room	130



	Area/Sq.Ft.
GYMNASIUM	9,840
Spectator Seating/Telescoping (350)	2,400
Gym Equipment Storage	300
Men's Public Toilet	240
Women's Public Toilet	240
HANDBALL COURTS (6) AND SPECTATOR GALLERY	5,280
GENERAL LOCKER ROOM	3,040
Locker Lobby	250
Attendant/Control	200
Utility Room	110
Men's/Boys' Lockers (120)	600
Showers/Drying (12)	250
Women's/Girls' Lockers (100)	600
Showers/Drying (12)	250
Wet/Dry Toilets (2)	200
Dressing Booths (12)	110
Make-up Area	100
INDOOR RUNNING TRACK	7,700
GENERAL EXERCISE AREA	7,900
Gymnastics	5,650
Weightlifting	1,680
Exercise Equipment Storage	450
SERVICE	2,940
Superintendent's Office	180
Toilet	96
Janitor/Maintenance Storage	240
General Storage	600
Mechanical	1,400
Receiving	260



	Area/Sg.Ft.
EXISTING HOUSE	3,800
Game Room	1,520
Club Room	1,250
Crafts	1,600
Program Pantry	300
Lounge	450
General Storage	250
Men's Public Toilet	150
Women's Public Toilet	200
 PARKING (125 cars)	 43,750



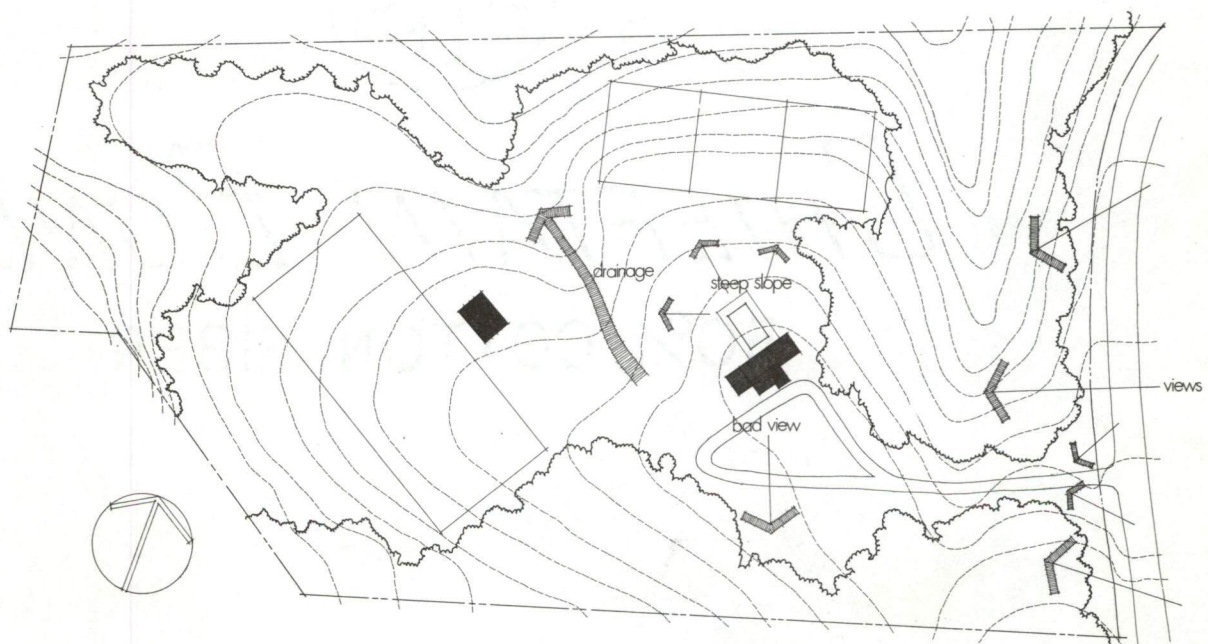
CHIEF OF POLICE

NEW YORK CITY

solution

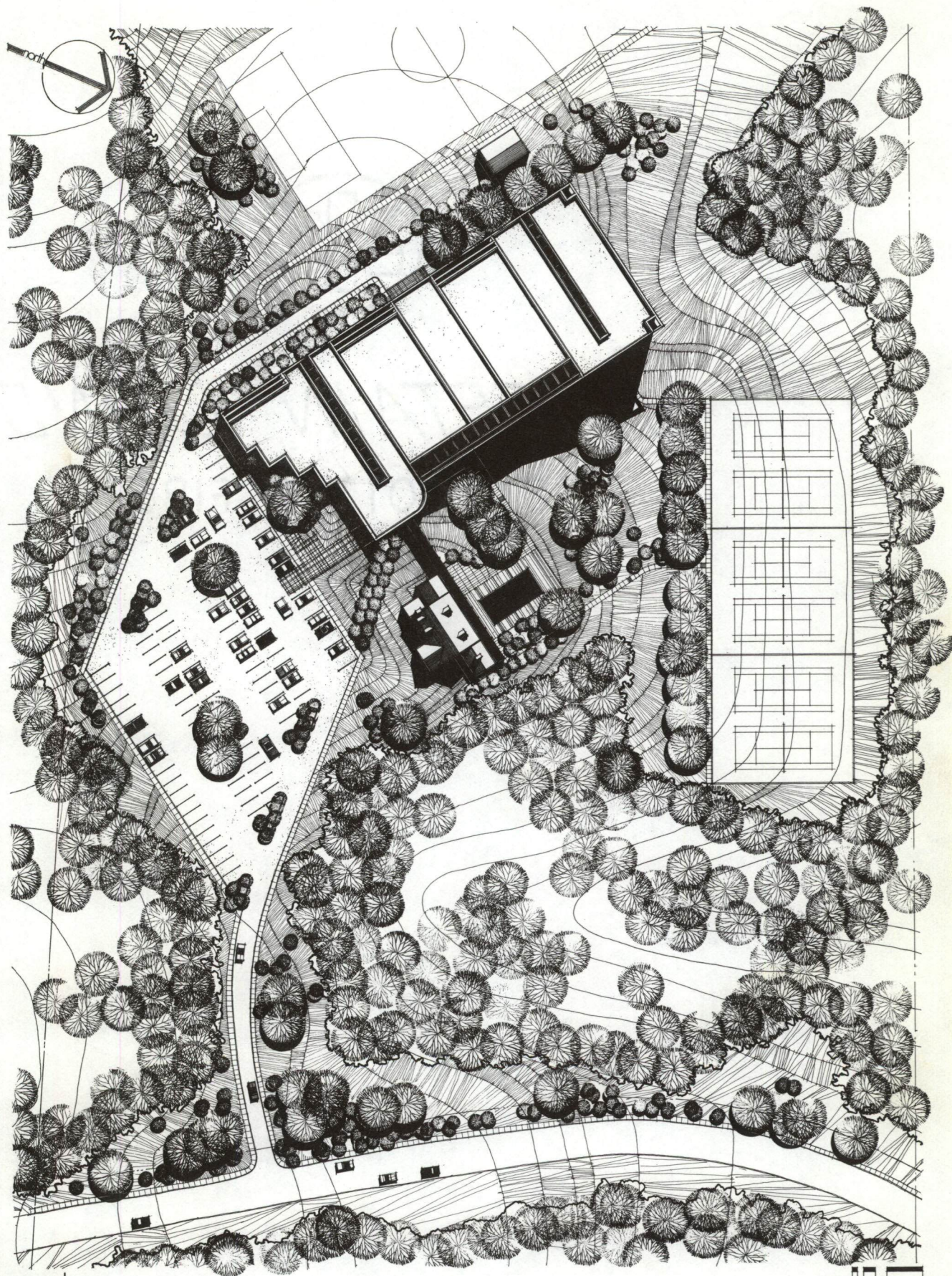
# a branch ymca for atlanta, ga.

a terminal project submitted to the faculty of the college  
of architecture, clemson university, in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of master of architecture



site analysis





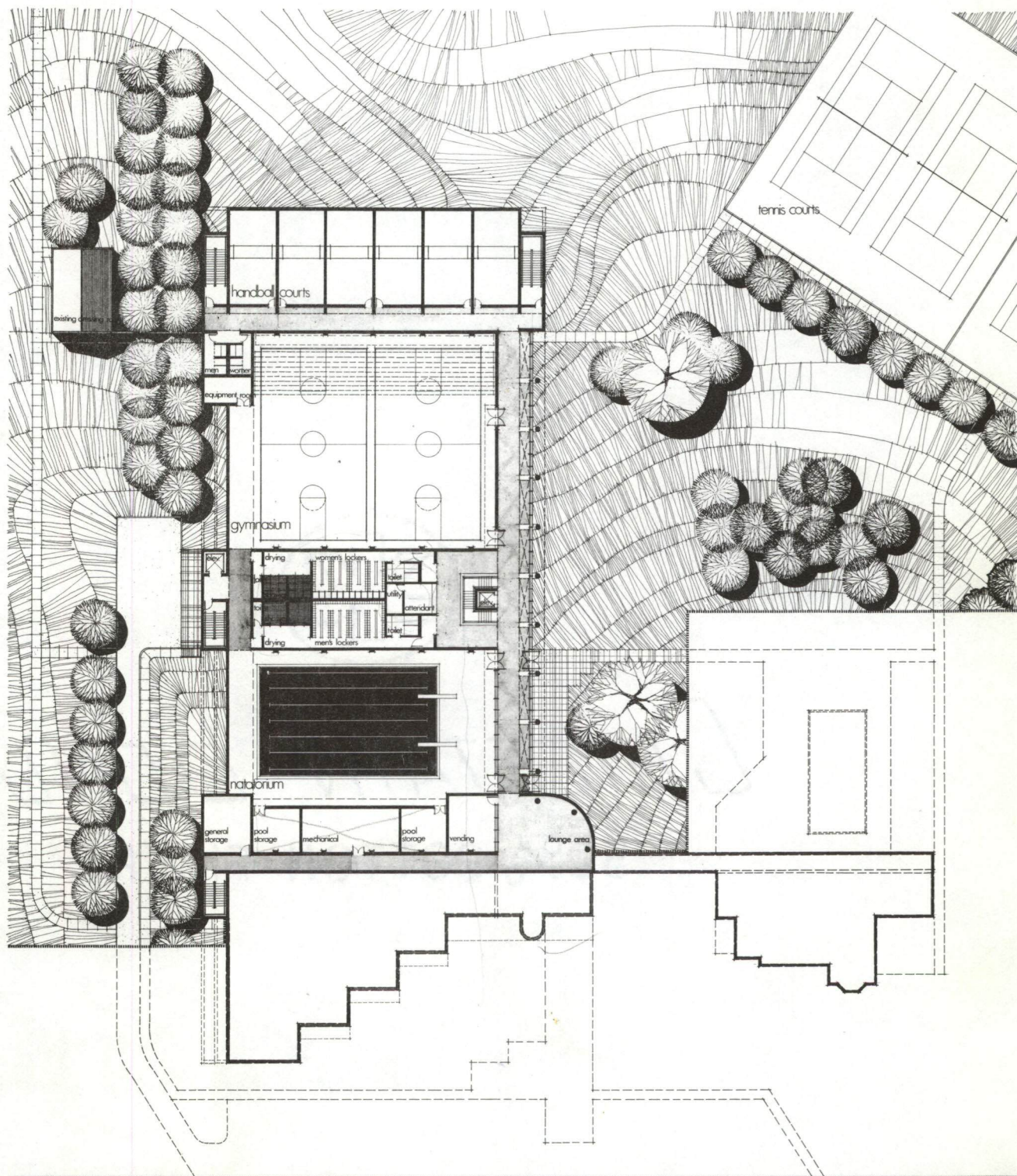
site plan

0 5 10 20 30 60



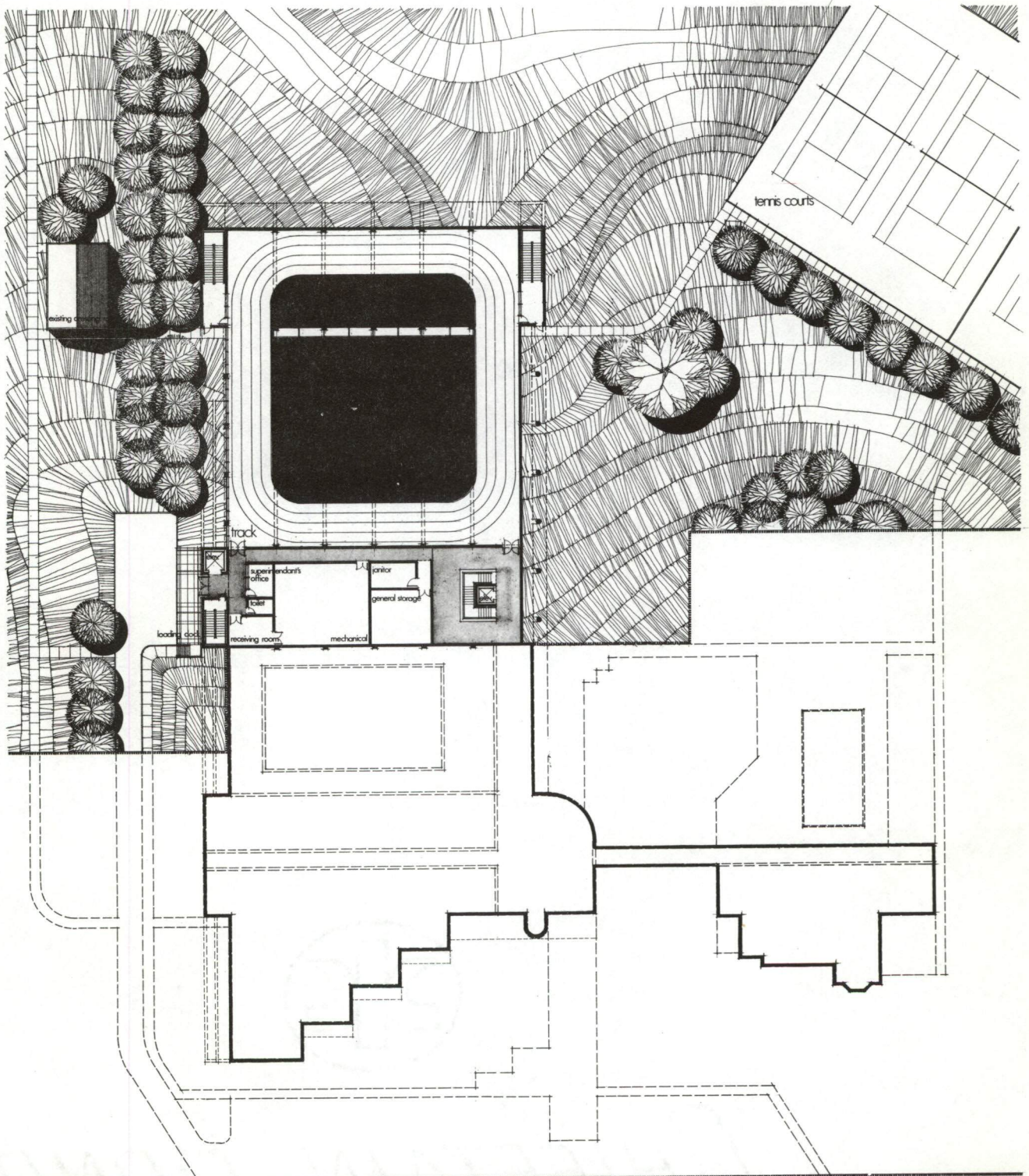






pool and gymnasium level

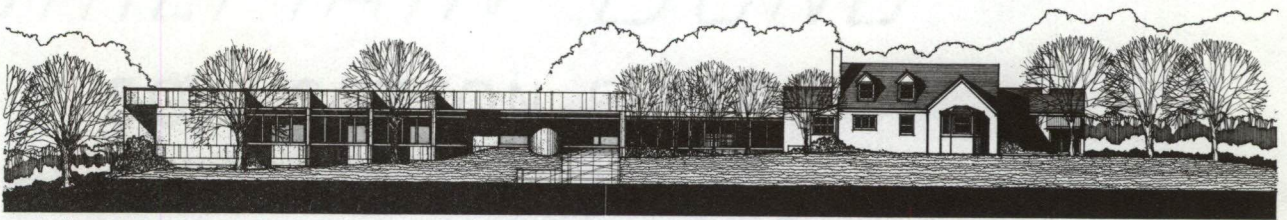




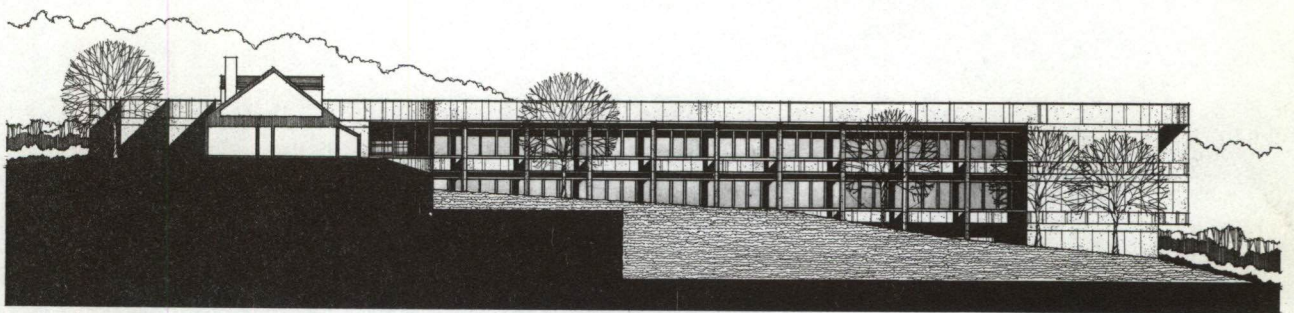
track level



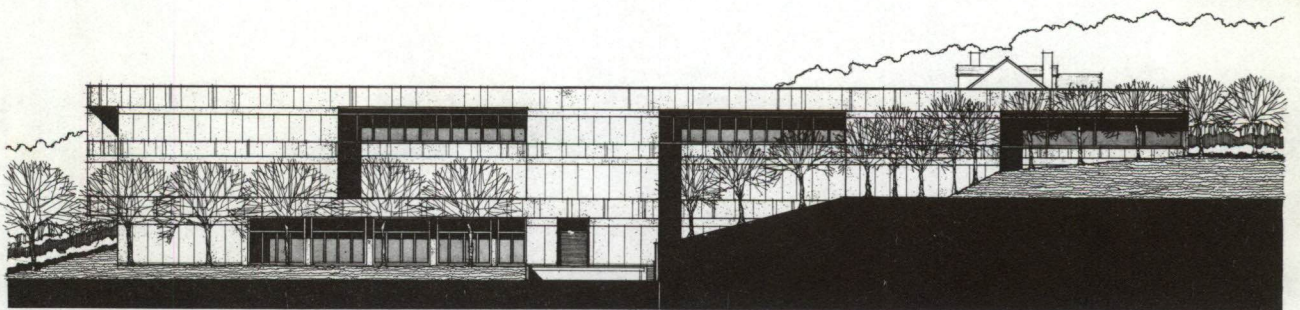




east elevation



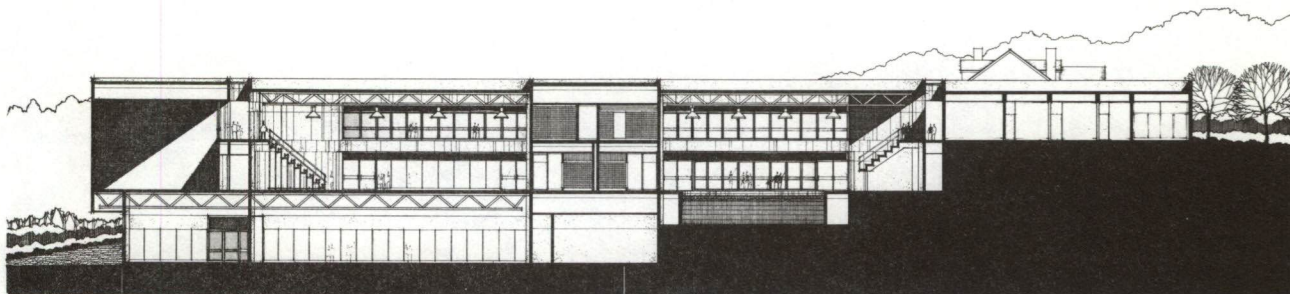
north elevation



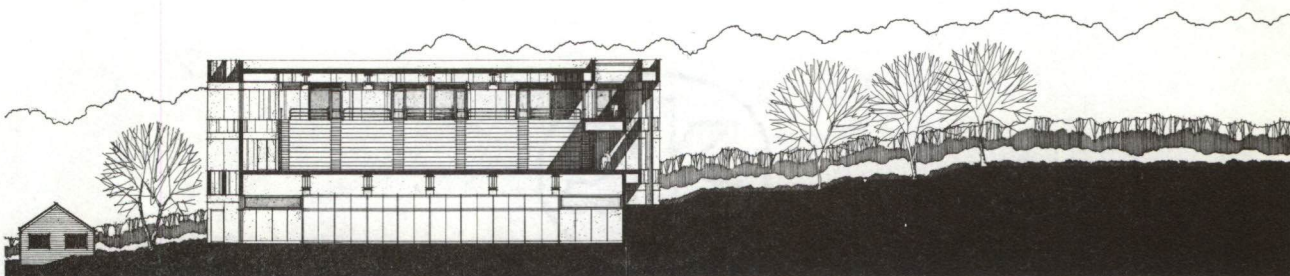
south elevation

elevations

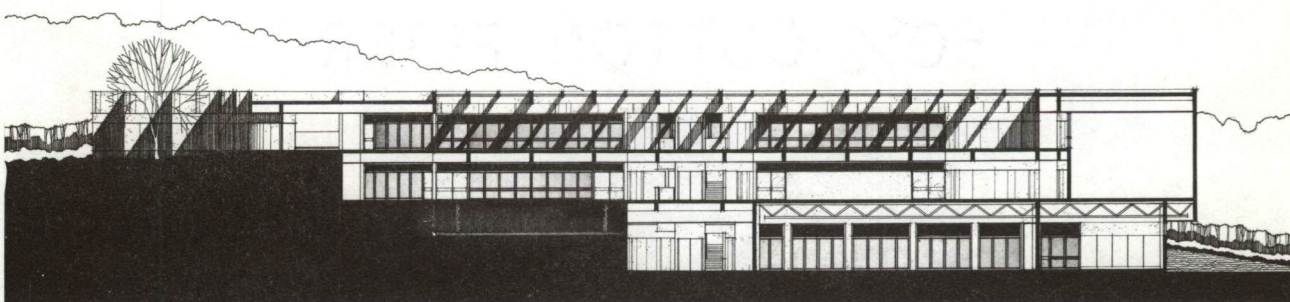




section a-a

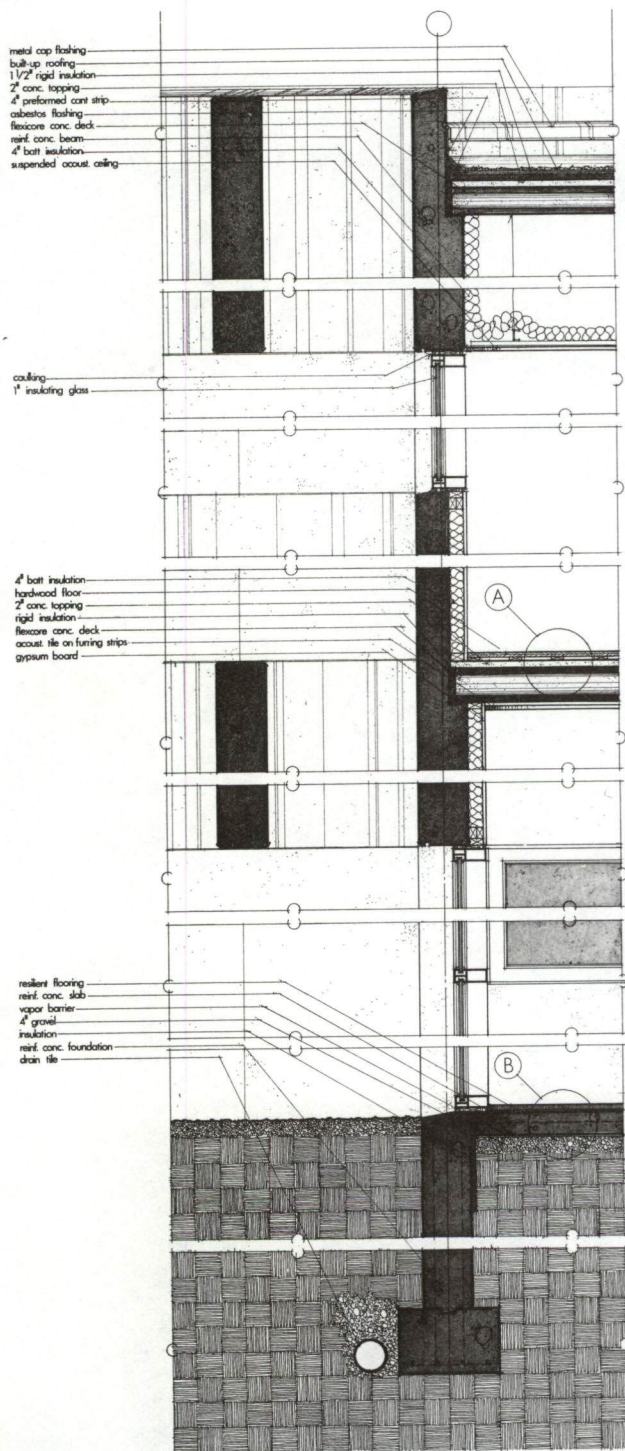


section b-b



section c-c

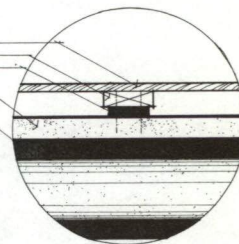
building sections



wall section

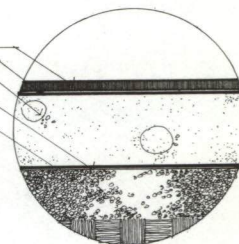


hard white maple flooring  
wood sleeper anchored to conc.  
resilient cushion  
2" conc. topping  
flexcore conc. deck

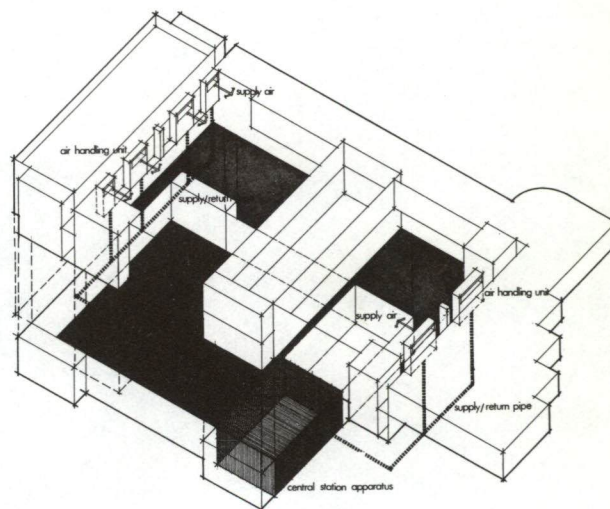


(A) detail thru gym floor

resilient flooring  
adhesive  
reinf. conc. slab  
vapor barrier  
4" gravel

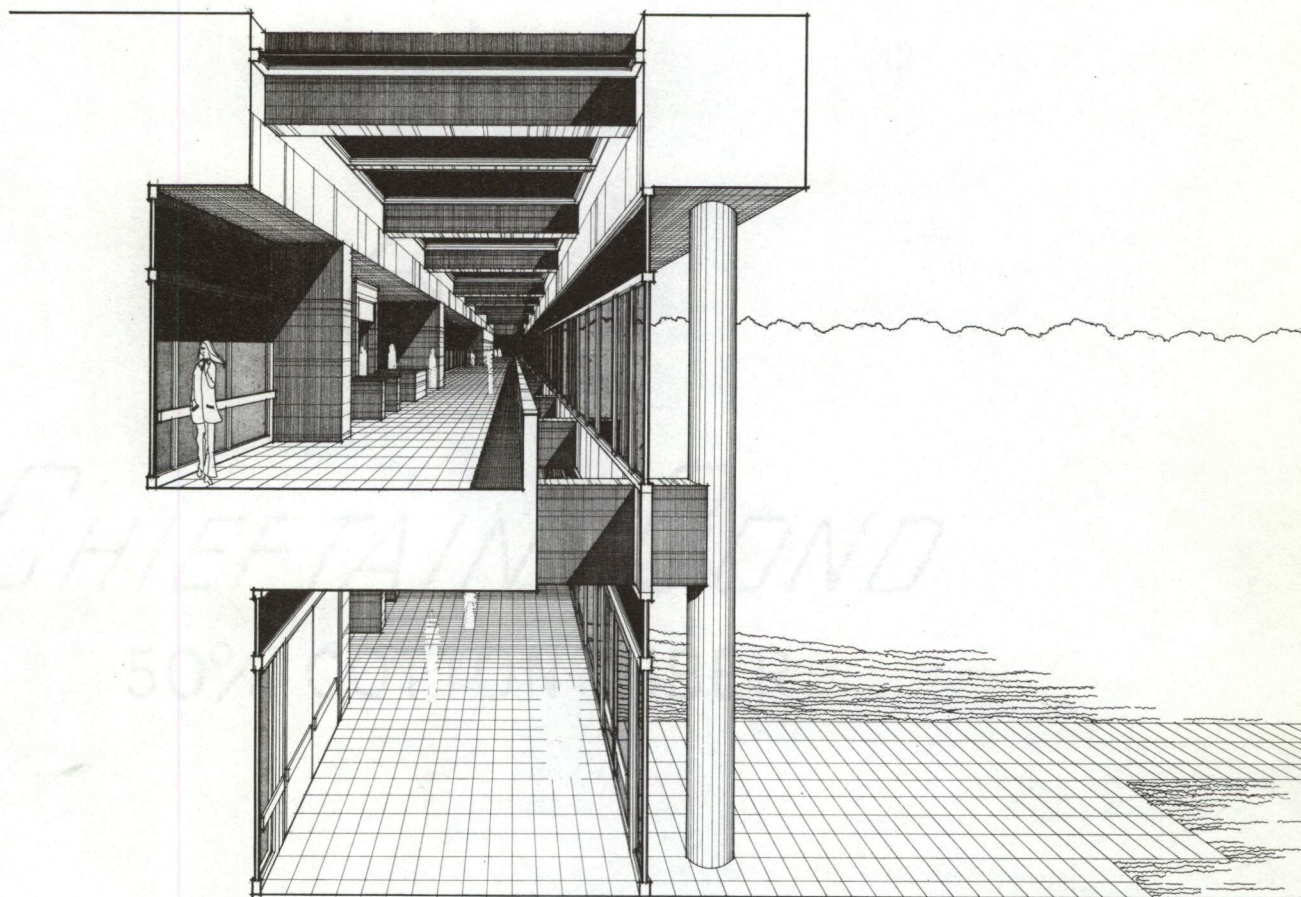


(B) detail thru track floor



mechanical





entrance level



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